BREAKING DOWN THE WALL: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE
RESISTANCE TOWARDS ENGAGED PEDAGOGY

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Breaking Down the Wall: A Critical Analysis of the Resistance Towards Engaged Pedagogy in Higher Education

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To my brother and my hero, Nathanael.
Write your self. Your body must be heard.

—Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa”
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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This project examines the resistance to engaged pedagogy. I am responding to what I see as the central crisis of the U.S. educational system: antagonistic relationships between teachers and students. Operating on the assumption that instructors do, indeed, desire more effective classroom environments but that they are skeptical of employing engaged pedagogy out of fear, I set out to reveal three obstacles that stand in the way of improving education.

I begin by looking at student resistance in the classroom and show how instructors misread this behavior rather than responding to its cause. Thus, I go on to establish how educational institutions have historically been in place to control specific populations through Louis Althusser’s discussion of Ideological State Apparatuses and Paulo Freire’s theory of the “banking system.” Instructors are hesitant to see themselves as a part of oppression but by aligning themselves with the concerns of students, they can take the first step in ameliorating tensions between students and teachers.

Next, I address instructors’ tendency to create a hierarchy between them and students by calling into question the legitimacy of “Truth” as a basis for education. Insisting that teachers have a responsibility to impart universal Truths to students creates an exclusionary and incomplete education. Attacks on liberal educators by people such as Lynne Cheney are shown to be rooted in fear and are counterproductive to the best interests of education. Instructors rely on Truth because it grants a level of control over students and although this dehumanizes students, without it there is the fear that the classroom will result in chaos.

Therefore, my last chapter looks at how teachers resist engaged pedagogy’s ability to create an embodied education, one that utilizes chaos to educational advantages. Western education has split the mind from the body and has censored body, desire, and genuine interaction out of the classroom. bell hooks and Jerry Farber provide valuable insights on how embodied education enriches the classroom. Uncertainty and discomfort do not have to be avoided, but can be harnessed for a more holistic educational experience.

Ultimately, I show that, while instructors’ fears of progressive pedagogies are understandable, they are not necessary. I want to illustrate the harm that has been done by the educational system, but more importantly, I want to demonstrate the great potential for healing and empowerment that education holds.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Sifting through my research on the state of education in the United States, one word seems to crop up over and over again regardless of era, political association, or pedagogical field: CRISIS. It would seem that since its birth in the nineteenth century, institutionalized public education has been in a state of crisis. The nation laments each decade: Where have our standards gone? Why don’t we have quality teachers? How will these programs be funded? What do we do with unmotivated and struggling students? What do we teach? How do we teach? Who do we blame? The questions are never-ending; the fingers point in a million directions. Politicians, parents, CEOs and critics all have a stake in how the U.S. educates. Each decade there is a new hot topic, but outside of budgetary woes, testing modules, and curriculum battles, there is an ongoing crisis at the heart of education that affects every other concern: the relationship between teacher and student.

I have chosen a particular way of writing about this crisis which must first be understood. I am looking at the educational environment in a state of crisis and one that often yields trauma to both students and teacher. I am also writing as a participant in the midst of this traumatic situation. Much of my thesis will center on the idea that students are marginalized and that their marginalized experiences must find a way to be vocalized through education. Susan C. Jarratt posits that “an experience of suffering is turned into a tool of language; an artful, rhetorical practice of self-multiplication used by speakers in response to their historical, rhetorical, and institutional circumstances” (1381). In many ways, this thesis is my way of responding to an experience of suffering and my rhetoric will reflect that with the use of personal narratives. Because this exploration focuses so much on relationships, which are intimate, subjective, and emotional, and, more specifically, relationships in crisis, which only exaggerates these qualities, I find that I can most effectively illustrate this aspect of the educational system by using personal narratives alongside my academic discussion. While personal narrative may be
considered out of place in such an academic endeavor of research, I agree with Stephanie Vandrick who states that “there is an enhanced understanding that there is nothing sacred about quantitative research, that no research or writing is truly objective, and that various types of research and writing can and do add different and valuable perspectives to the bodies of knowledge and scholarship in most disciplines” (11). Writing in a non-traditional voice emphasizes my claim that academic traditions (such as traditional discourse) must be looked at critically and ultimately transformed. Furthermore, this rhetorical choice allows me to embody a marginalized voice rather than just speak for it.¹ Using my journey through higher education as evidence hopefully gives life to both the students and the teachers that are affected by the crisis in education every day. My goal in using personal narrative as my foundation is to continually remind my reader of the urgency, immediacy, and actuality of this crisis. While the argument laid out here may not be wholly new (in fact, the nature of relationships in education have been examined for millennia), it must be revisited for each generation. I do not want to have an objective, dispassionate, or abstracted discussion of a faraway issue. Also, like Vandrick, it is important to me that my work be accessible on every level, because I strongly believe this is an issue that must be addressed to each participant in the school system, from young students to tired parents to busy politicians to, of course, established academics. Finally, using a more flexible rhetorical approach allows me to reflect on the multiple levels I have and do occupy while writing this thesis.

As a graduate student, I find myself in a unique position, navigating both roles and trying to make sense of the vast separation that happens between the front of the classroom and the uncomfortable desks that fill it. After seventeen years of education, I have occupied various roles as a student and observed countless types of teachers. I have been the student with her hand constantly raised. I have been the student sleeping on my desk. I have snarled at my teachers, convinced that they were out to get me. I have stayed late, expostulating with my teachers over the subject matter. I have treated

¹ For a lengthier discussion of how others use rhetoric to negotiate issues of marginalization, post-colonialism, and academic writing see Susan C. Jarratt’s essay “Beside Ourselves: Rhetoric and Representation in Feminist Writing.”
teachers like mentors, some like enemies, and others as completely inconsequential to my life. However, throughout all these roles, certain patterns emerge.

Often, the more that I actively try to participate in my education, the more I find myself on the fringes of the classroom experience. I frequently make my teachers uncomfortable. Upon reading *Madame Bovary*, I found myself at the center of a spirited classroom debate. I resisted the interpretation that the heroine should be condemned for her infidelity or her suicide. I defended her inability to fully love her husband. I argued that her suicide did not, in fact, make her weak. Furthermore, I felt that by characterizing her in this manner, Flaubert contributed to the degradation of women that continues to this day. The way that I attempted to explain my reactions to my teacher and classmates was through my own experience as a female. I shared Madame Bovary's plight as I reflected on how I grew up with the expectation to find security through marriage and with the responsibility to “treasure” my sexuality for one man only. The discussions of her suicide were particularly difficult, as I read them as someone with a history of depression. I did not separate the reading from my life. As I spoke out and defended Madame Bovary from both my peers and the author’s treatment of her, my voice shook and my eyes watered. My professor quickly cleared his throat and awkwardly tried to “refocus” the discussion on the elements of Romanticism the novel embodied. It was not just that my life was not relevant to the discussion; my life seemed to contradict and complicate the accepted, traditional reading in unwelcome ways. This experience has been engrained in me since elementary school. The personal lessons that I might gather from literature had to be discerned, interpreted, and applied to my life privately, not in the classroom. Thus, starting out as a teacher, I desperately wanted to invite my students’ lives into the classroom. I wanted to create an environment where each of our experiences became a text to learn from. This desire, however, was met with foreboding.

“Be careful” are the words I hear most often as a new teacher. Be careful not to come across as too nice or the students will take advantage. Be careful not to wear anything too casual or risqué. They might think I’m “just a student” or, worse yet, the male students might “get the wrong idea.” Be careful not to give students too much room in generating their own ideas for papers, because who knows what inane ramblings they’ll come up with. Be careful not to stray from the text and into opinion-based banter. This
is especially dangerous when topics such as race, religion, or sex come up. Students may get offended. They may argue. They may say something politically incorrect. Discomfort will ensue. Over and over again, I heard the warnings. It was as if students were some sleeping enemy that I was expected to tiptoe around to prevent some unknown catastrophe. As I made the choice to shift my academic attention to the goal of teaching, a fear immediately began to grow inside me about what sort of teacher I could, would or should become.

My life changed, academically, professionally, and personally when I was introduced to the idea of engaged pedagogy. All of the sudden, I wasn’t crazy; there was an entire movement behind me. My idealism actually had a name. More than just a teaching praxis, engaged pedagogy is a movement to transform the traditional classroom and ultimately education as a whole by rethinking relationships between students and teachers. Most notable to this movement is Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator who, with his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, mobilized many teachers to reeducate themselves on how to educate their students. Paulo Freire’s teaching was born out of a specific context in Brazil. It began as a means to give literacy and thus political agency to impoverished farmers. This setting may seem far away from the contemporary context of the United States’ higher education institutions. Students at the college level are required to be literate and, while not perfect, the political climate in the U.S. allows most of its citizens to participate. What these two contexts share is not a particular political movement or immediate material goals, but rather a larger theoretical issue concerning the place of humanity in the classroom.

Engaged pedagogy strives to create a conversation rather than a lecture between teacher and student. In this manner, learning is no longer an action forced upon passive students. Instead, students are valued for their ability to actively learn and teach

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2 I have chosen to use the broader, more flexible term “engaged” pedagogy rather than “critical” pedagogy as it allows me to include my influences that do not strictly fall into conventional critical pedagogy but share the same goals of rethinking the traditional educational system and empowering students. Some of my sources will use the term “critical pedagogy,” but it should be understood that I am using engaged pedagogy as an umbrella containing critical pedagogy.

3 For a more detailed account of Freire’s work see Sheryl June Gobble’s “Paulo Freire and the Basics of Writing” in which she spells out Freire’s theories at length and gives them a practical application in the writing classroom.
simultaneously. Freire explains the changed dynamic between student and teacher:

Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-students with student-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. In this process, arguments based on “authority” are no longer valid.

Rethinking authority is a key component in approaching engaged pedagogy and has been one of the greatest influences on me as a teacher. As a student, while I respected the greater academic experience the teacher had achieved, I also resented the idea that the teacher's position automatically trumped my own experience. After all, I came into each classroom with my own expertise, as did my classmates. Conversely, as a new teacher only three to six years older than my students, I felt uncomfortable assuming that I had any grand universal truths to impart upon them. Instead, what makes me strong as a teacher is my ability to relate to my students, to struggle when they struggle, to encourage them, to show enthusiasm for the subject, and model for them the chaotic but rewarding process of learning.

Engaged pedagogy allows me to embrace this role. Discussing her process in creating a classroom based on freedom of thought and inclusion, bell hooks, a self-professed follower of Freire’s work, confesses that she realized it was necessary to “overcome years of socialization that had taught me to believe a classroom was diminished if students and professors regarded one another as ‘whole’ human beings, striving not just for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world” (14-15). Choosing dialogue over authority permits abstract knowledge to become knowledge that is applicable to the student and teacher's physical lives.

The physical life of both students and teachers is central to my understanding of engaged pedagogy, which has been encouraged by feminist theory, especially feminist pedagogy. In particular, the work of bell hooks has greatly contributed to the theory of an embodied education. hooks claims, “Beyond the realm of critical thought, it is

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4 Feminist scholarship also contributes to my choice to use personal narrative. For further discussion see Vandrick (12-13).

5 Another key contribution of feminist thought to engaged pedagogy hooks addresses is the self-actualization of the teacher. While this thesis focuses on the social location of the student and strives to help teachers understand student motivations and needs, I am also concerned with the identity and
equally crucial that we learn to enter the classroom 'whole' and not as 'disembodied spirit" (193). hooks recognizes the vital presence of the physical body in the classroom. When discussing the value and politics of knowledge and the need to deconstruct the separation between student and teachers, abstract truths and lived experience, bodily knowledge must be included. hooks explains that “those of us who have been intimately engaged as students or teachers with feminist thinking have always recognized the legitimacy of a pedagogy that dares to subvert the mind/body split and allows us to be a whole in the classroom, and as consequence wholehearted” (193). Within engaged pedagogy, feminist thought emphasizes the need to deconstruct the separation between mind and body, allowing education to be a more holistic experience.

However, it is important to draw the distinction between acknowledging the individual as a whole being, and dictating the whole of the individual. Engaged pedagogy does not presume to apply one universal “Truth” to students’ educational needs. Instead, engaged pedagogy allows students and teachers to approach the world as pieces of a puzzle awaiting conception. Education becomes a place to ask questions of the world and of ourselves. Freire dubs this “problem-posing education,” which “affirms men and women as beings in the process of becoming—as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality” (84). Just as the world is a place to be further fashioned and improved, human beings are in a continual state of change and growth. Furthermore, Freire explains that “the unfinished character of human beings and the transformational character of reality necessitate that education be an ongoing activity” (84). Humanity is not static and critical pedagogy does not resist that uncertain state but embraces its possibilities. The revolutionary idea behind this pedagogy is that instead of humans awkwardly conforming themselves to a rigid educational system, the educational system adapts to the fluidity of the human experience.

However, this is not to be mistaken as a self-absorbed approach to education that focuses solely on the individual and his or her relative needs. Again a distinction must be made to clarify the purpose of student-centered learning. hooks asserts that “while it is utterly unreasonable for students to expect classrooms to be therapy sessions, it is

empowerment of the instructor. Students needn't gain a voice at the expense of the teacher losing theirs.
appropriate for them to hope that the knowledge received in these settings will enrich and enhance them” (19). However, we can take this goal of enriching the student a step further and say that by enriching the life of one student, that one student goes on to enrich the community he/she belongs to. Freire believes that engaged pedagogy “affirms women and men as beings who transcend themselves, who move forward and look ahead, for whom immobility represents a fatal threat, for whom looking past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are so they can more wisely build the future” (84). The hope is that the immediate human experience will be used as an impetus to imagine a better future experience for entire communities. But this is not a linear process in which students go from Point A to simply arrive at Point B and be finished. The give and take between student and teacher, between knowledge and experience, must be continuous.

Freire argues that the “[w]orld and human beings do not exist apart from each other, they exist in constant interaction” (50) [my emphasis]. To understand this concept fully within critical pedagogy we should view it as two connected words, inter-action. Both the necessity of exchange between people, ideas, institutions and the necessity for literal action must be stressed. Previously, hooks expressed students’ and teachers’ desire for “knowledge of how to live in the world,” signaling the importance of education, not merely as a mental and isolated practice, but a practice of movement and experience within a social realm. In his article “Critical Literacy and Postcolonial Praxis: A Freirian Perspective,” Peter McLaren helps us understand the role of inter-action, stating, “The task of the critical educator is to enable individuals to acquire a language through which to reflect upon and shape their experiences and in certain instances transform such experiences in the interest of social responsibility” (8). Individual experience becomes the drive for social responsibility. Action is necessary. Transformation of self into self-awareness is necessary. And educators must be the spark for both.

I immediately and enthusiastically seized this call to action. The initial fear that had been planted in me was eased by the possibility of an alternate pedagogy. Engaged pedagogy encompasses the reasons I wanted to become a teacher in the first place. It made so much sense to me: use education to liberate, to humanize, to change society, a
manifesto of a radically different way to approach education. Treat students like equals, instead of enemies. It was beautiful! Naively, I expected others to feel the same way, yet while many of my colleagues recognized the need for an improved classroom environment, the common wisdom remained: “Be careful.” The teaching community seems too often to be defined by deeply rooted emotions of fear, resentment, and frustration towards the students. Even though it has become trendier to “relate” to one's students, using pop culture and current events to entice them into academic conversations, the overall separation between student and teacher remains. As for attitudes towards engaged pedagogy, they range from skepticism to a passionate hate, none of which I understood.

I had to realize that my willingness to accept engaged pedagogy was built on several assumptions. First and foremost, engaged pedagogy is a response to a particular historical tradition which many consider oppressive. The idea that “literacy may link hope to possibility through developing various means of resisting oppression so that a better world can be summoned, struggled for, and eventually grasped” (McLaren 10) presupposes that instructors recognize this oppression. Thus, based on a particular acknowledgment of history I will first set out to reveal why students and liberal educators resist traditional forms of education. The incredibly well-meaning and brilliant professor who led me into the world of Romanticism and Madame Bovary may have not been considering the powerful sexist dialogue that Flaubert was taking part in, or at least not the immediate effect it had on his student. He very possibly did not recognize that I was not trying to be a difficult student obsessing over my own personal reading. I was trying to carve out a place for myself as a female in a male-narrated course. Many professors are less inclined to see their approach to literature as ideological, let alone a harmfully ideological one. Freire acknowledges this, stating, “Discovering himself to be an oppressor may cause considerable anguish, but then it does not necessarily lead to solidarity with the oppressed” (49). In order for instructors to prevent alienation in their classrooms, they must acknowledge the oppressive history of educational institution that has created resistant students.

Secondly and closely tied with the first is the assumption that knowledge can be created. It is more common to hear education referred to as the transferring of Truth
from instructor to student. The idea that universal Truths exist allows the aforementioned oppression to be justified. An instructor could easily respond to my alternate interpretations of literature with, “You are just wrong.” Lynne V. Cheney embodies this position, calling followers of engaged pedagogy “radicals” and their approach to education as literally “lying”:

In the late 1960s and early '70s, student radicals began moving into English departments, cultivating the idea that there is no truth—and therefore no possibility of untruth. As the radicals gained power and their views spread across the university and through society, lying came to be regarded not so much as a transgression that ought to produce guilt, but as an alternative "construction," a "narrative" with all the legitimacy that the unenlightened attribute to "truth." (English 50)

Although many educators may not use the polarizing language of Cheney, they agree that there are “correct” ways to look at history, literature, and art. They believe that if a student studies hard enough and devotes enough time to a subject, they will arrive at the Truth about this subject. Furthermore, they believe that certain subjects are more valid, more enlightening than others (Shakespeare vs. Rowling, Economics vs. Basket-Weaving). However, when teachers are the only ones with answers in a classroom, students are at the mercy of the teachers' authority. Students feel they have nothing to contribute to a process that relies on Truth and the established Truth may seem invalid and irrelevant to the student, further belittling and degrading students. And so, I will try to unpack instructors' deep attachments to this notion of Truth.

Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, engaged pedagogy is built on the assumption that the goal of education is to humanize. In fact, this entire exploration of pedagogy operates on the assumption that educators are invested in their students and invested in the hope for a future in education that does not include crisis. But, if teachers acknowledge the oppressive tradition of education, if they detach themselves from the cult of Truth and ask students to create knowledge alongside them, then teachers will ultimately realize that what faces them each morning is a classroom full of complex and often conflicted human beings. Unfortunately, there exists in our society a great fear of humanity, much of which centers around the fear of acknowledging the body and sexuality in the classroom. The acknowledgment of history and the rejection of Truth are actions done with the ultimate goal of being able to restore the humanity of students.
Therefore, I will address the fear and the potential of humanity, specifically in terms of the body, in the classroom.

Rather than create a manifesto with the sole purpose of celebrating engaged pedagogy and admonishing those who resist it, I want to understand why instructors put up walls towards a more rewarding educational experience. Freire is careful to point out that “one does not liberate people by alienating them” (79). I want to acknowledge both the fierce opposition towards engaged pedagogy that comes from the Conservative Right and the more subtle skepticism that is seen in well-meaning teachers who flounder in a less supportive environment. Teachers are essential to the liberation of students and can, in fact, be liberated along with students. What follows is an account of the tradition, the fear, and the obsession with Truth that fights against engaged pedagogy and, hopefully, a demystification of these elements. This thesis is my plea to address the anxieties of my peers, to reclaim my own educational path, and to be able to re-imagine the classroom not as a battlefield, but as a community.
CHAPTER 2

THE TRADITION OF OPPRESSIVE EDUCATION

We don't need no education
We don't need no thought control
No dark sarcasm in the classroom
Teachers leave them kids alone
Hey! Teachers! Leave them kids alone!

All in all it's just another brick in the wall.
All in all you're just another brick in the wall.
Pink Floyd, “Another Brick in the Wall Part II”

Engaged pedagogy responds to specific crises centered on the needs of students, particularly the feelings of alienation, oppression and disempowerment that mark student life. The initial hesitancy that teachers possess in accepting an alternate pedagogy is caused by a lack of empathy towards this experience. Delving into the need for engaged pedagogy, it is first necessary to paint a picture of the classic teacher/student relationship and the history that has created this relationship. One of the most powerful representations of this troubled dynamic comes from rock and roll.

Alan Parker’s 1982 film *Pink Floyd The Wall*, based on Pink Floyd’s 1979 album, follows the life of Pink, a boy growing up in post-WWII England battling abandonment, isolation, addiction, and the inability to find his place in an indifferent world. While this deeply metaphorical movie comments on everything from the supposed dangerous sexuality of women to fascist regimes, Pink’s journey begins in the classroom. It is in school that he is introduced to the lessons that will haunt him for the rest of his life and at the finale, the movie returns to the school setting as children ultimately destroy the wall that Pink has built to protect himself. Arguably the most well-known song from Pink Floyd’s album (and their only single to hit number one on both UK and US charts), “Another Brick in the Wall Part II” accompanies the scene of Pink’s school days. The scene depicts the process of children transformed into misshapen, faceless students who are consequently deposited from a conveyor belt into a large machine and ground into
meat. The antagonist of this situation is a buttoned-up, hen-pecked professor who takes out the frustration of his marriage on students by physically and psychologically degrading them. In particular, the professor mocks the creative endeavors of Pink when he is found writing poetry. Ultimately, the students reclaim their identities, revolt against the machinery of the school, and burn the school house down. In the mere six minutes that this scene takes place, Pink Floyd is able to embody the historical and continued reality of how educational institutions dehumanize students in order to reproduce obedient, pacified members of society and the supplementary reality of the unwillingness of humans to be oppressed. Often sampled, the chorus is sung by the voices of students rising up against their teachers and against “education’s” attempt to conform the students into mere bricks in society’s wall. This song is not simply an expression of a single artist’s negative school experience but rather is indicative of a much larger cultural phenomenon: student resistance and the culpability of instructors.

Even though this song is sympathetic towards the student population, teachers can easily relate to the relationship illustrated. From either side, it is an “us against them” mentality. While students celebrate the fantasy of tearing down a school all through K-12, for teachers, losing control of one’s students is a palpable nightmare. Outside of Pink Floyd’s film and a decade of civil unrest in the 1960s, students do not usually turn to violent revolt.6 Instead, students find much subtler ways to act out against the classroom. These subtle acts can be just as terrifying as the physical destruction of a classroom. What do you do when a student talks back? How do you handle the situation when one student offends another? What if they refuse to complete assignments? How do you react when they just mentally “check out”? Citing Henry Giroux, Theodore Sizer, and Peter McLaren for support, Ira Shor argues that students “resist/engage/manipulate the teacher, the process, and the institution through their informal power” (17). One concrete and simple example of their “informal power” is student seating patterns, which are not surprising to anyone who has experienced the U.S. school system: a few enthusiastic students sit up front, while the majority of the students cram into the back corners “as distant from…the teacher (the center of authority and academic discourse) as they could

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6 However, it could be argued that the disturbing and growing trend of school shootings is forms of this rebellion.
be” (12). Shor dubs this “the Siberian Syndrome” and posits that “students’ relationship to seating is a significant text revealing the power relations embedded in schooling, or the social power ‘circulating’ in the discipline of school” (10). Some teachers attempt to prevent this phenomenon by sitting down with students or seating students in circles. However, these efforts often create more anxiety. Shor claims that he tries to decenter himself as the focal point of authority by sitting in the back of the classroom. As a result, he recounts that his students “leaned back or to the side in their adjacent seats to open up more space between us” and the “mutual discomfort was visceral” (21). This is perhaps because “Siberia” does not just create physical space between students and the center of authority. It also allows students the room to join in other various acts of resistance or disturbance during class time: napping, cheating, chatting, and most recently with the explosion of portable technology, the ability to “virtually” exit the classroom altogether. These obnoxious behaviors are generally passive but effective in creating distance from the educational system.

It is easy for many instructors to accept the idea that students are just naturally miserable creatures whose only goal is to make their academic lives and the lives of their instructors equally miserable or write students off as lazy and uninterested. However, students must be given much more credit. These seemingly immature “behavioral” problems can be read as a way of students forming an antagonistic identity towards a system they feel powerless in. In fact, the Siberian Syndrome “is a defensive reaction to the unequal power relations of schooling, which include unilateral authority for the teacher and a curriculum evading critical thought about the history, language and cultures of the students” (13) or “cultural conflict in the undemocratic classroom” (14). It is important to remember that even a simple act of sitting at the back of the classroom is still an action, “a site of human-agency, a lived experience, not a mere passive withdrawal” (27). Assessing the failure of the U.S. educational system, Michael Moore rightly identifies that the “the shared assumption is that most students are either unprepared or unwilling to learn what is presented in the traditional college classroom” (Moore 30). Yet, looking at students’ behavior through the lens of Shor or Robert Brooke, we can view these seemingly trivial acts not as resistance towards knowledge but as a revolt against the system that guards knowledge.
Teachers met with such revolt often react defensively. After all, the students generally arrive on the first day unwilling to give the class a chance and the teacher is left asking, “What did I ever do to them?” bell hooks claims she had been taught to believe that her classroom would be “diminished” if teachers were no longer the authoritarians, the all-knowing, and did not remain at an appropriate distance from their students. It is a common fear among teachers: the fear of losing control, losing authority. She elaborates on this fear more explicitly, saying, “Many teachers are disturbed by the political implications of a multicultural education because they fear losing control in a classroom where there is no one way to approach a subject—only multiple ways and multiple references” (36). Furthermore, she continues, “the unwillingness to approach teaching from a standpoint that includes awareness of race, sex, and class is often rooted in the fear that classrooms will be uncontrollable, that emotions and passions will not be contained” (39). The complexities of this fear pertain to a larger societal fear of humanity that will be dealt with later. For now, what is important is that the fear of students clouds instructors’ ability to empathize with students’ discomfort in the classroom. Consequently, both students and teachers tacitly agree to a game of tug of war, a power struggle.

Our culture has accepted this adversarial dynamic and expects it from our classrooms. Every teacher-prep course comes with a list of what the students will “try to get away with” and remedies to prevent this. Teachers prepare for class as one might prepare for battle: their armor is a modest, professional dress code to ensure the students visually set the teacher apart; their weapons are well-rehearsed rebuttals to student excuses and predetermined highlighted phrases from the text and a detailed outline of the day’s lesson plan which allow the teachers to be in control of the discussion and remain an expert on the topic at hand. But what if, as teachers, we took a step back and instead of accepting that the students are against us, asked what caused this resistance in the first place? What if we took a moment to look at ourselves, not as just individuals trying to put a paycheck together, but as part of a historical reality that may be unpleasant? Essentially, engaged pedagogy is asking teachers to become dissenters, to join the chorus of “we don’t need no thought control,” to take a stand against a tradition of oppression.
Instructors can do so first by taking a more positive approach to the “Siberian Syndrome” described by Shor.

Robert Brooke calls this behavior “underlife” and actually argues that dissident behavior can be beneficial to the goals of a critical education.\(^7\) He explains that “in sociological theory, ‘underlife’ refers to those behaviors which undercut the roles expected of participants in a situation—the ways an employee, for example, shows she is not just an employee, but has a more complex outside that role” (721). While underlife activity can be maddeningly distracting to a teacher, teachers could benefit from the knowledge that students are trying to “provide identities that go beyond the roles offered by the normal teacher-as-lecturer, student-as-passive-learner educational system” (721). This speaks to the need for classroom goals that encompass more than the memorization of curriculum, but also takes into account students as self-actualized beings. Paying attention to the student as a whole and real person (which will be further elaborated on in Chapter 4) has the potential to make the curriculum more effective. Brooke asserts, “For students to see themselves as chemists, or social scientists, or writers, they must first see themselves as more than just students in our classrooms, as real thinkers with power and ability in this area” (731). In order for students to see themselves as “more than just students,” teachers must first see their students as more than just students. This begins with acknowledging student resistance as a valid statement about the educational institution.

The contempt for the educational system can be explained with a brief look at the history of English education.\(^8\) Terry Eagleton clarifies that English studies grew and flourished in the Victorian age of the nineteenth century because of the “failure of religion” (2243). Eagleton argues, “Literature, in the meaning of the word we have inherited, is an ideology. It has the most intimate relations to questions of social power”

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\(^7\) Brooke also explains how writing instructors participate in underlife by creating classroom environments and fostering attitudes in the students that undermine the traditional institution (728-730). This fits in with my overall project—the hope that teachers will use engaged pedagogy to combat traditional schooling—and I agree that the writing class is an ideal location for this work. However, that is not my primary focus here.

\(^8\) Since this chapter focuses on the current consequences of this history, I will be asserting only a few major claims about the history of English education. In *The Formation of College Education*, Thomas P. Miller is also concerned with the political and social motivations behind English education and gives a detailed account of the history outlined here.
He explains that where religion was once able to control a population, English studies took up that burden and was able to “communicate to [the working class] the moral riches of bourgeois civilization, impress upon them a reverence for middle-class achievements, and since reading is an essentially solitary, contemplative activity, curb them in any disruptive tendency to collective political action” (2246). Like religion before it, English was taught to instill not just cultural and class identity, but acquiescence to that identity. While the Bible teaches humility and servitude towards God, easing the pain of those without money or position, a standardized education, particularly in the Humanities, could teach humility and servitude towards the State. Further comparing English education to religion, Eagleton argues both are “a pacifying influence, fostering meekness, self-sacrifice and the contemplative inner life” (2244). Freire places this pacifying influence in the classroom setting, explaining that “the educator’s role is to regulate the way the world ‘enters into’ the students…. And since people ‘receive’ the world as passive entities, education should make them more passive still, and adapt them to the world” (76). The ability to adapt to one's society, self-sacrifice, and so forth: these are not necessarily negative qualities, unless one takes into account how they can be manipulated to subjugate entire classes of people. David H. Richter extends this mollifying objective of English studies to show the effects on would-be colonies. Describing the origins of English studies as a means to acculturate, or rather, indoctrinate colonized groups such as the Scottish and the Indians, he explains, “The British had conquered India with ships and cannon; they would rule it with Shakespeare” (17).

The potential of Literature to “rule” is illustrated in Louis Althusser’s discussion of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). ISAs include various institutions in the private sector such as churches, families, and schools that are “unified…beneath the ruling ideology, which is the ideology of the ‘ruling class’” (1490-91). Althusser argues that the most efficient method of preserving authority is creating a foundation of citizens that uphold authority automatically. This “requires…a reproduction of [citizens’] submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression, so that they, too, will
provide for the domination of the ruling class” (1485). These institutions do not (at least primarily) have to rely on guns, threats, or prisons to maintain control. Instead, an ISA relies on the hegemony of the ideology that justifies the State’s rule. If Indians were indoctrinated with the superiority of British norms, British culture, and British language, they would not oppose British rule (we know how that turned out). In the words of Freire, “this concept is well suited to the purposes of the oppressors, whose tranquility rests on how well people fit the world the oppressors have created, and how little they question it” (76), which leads one to ask: How does an oppressive system of power accomplish this acquiescence?

More important than being able to maintain control with physical weapons is the need to maintain control of ideologies, national identity, and specific “correct” versions of the Truth. This control can and has succeeded through choices in education, especially Literature. Richter elaborates on the power of what or how we educate, claiming that “if we choose to read Plato and Aristotle and Hobbes, we are in effect choosing to reproduce in ourselves their view of the world” (22). The issue here is whether or not it is the students who “choose” to read Plato and “choose” to see the world as Plato did or if that choice was made for them. Most often, it is the latter of the two and it is this passive role that leads Shor to the observation that students show up to class “waiting for the professor to do education to them, like other teachers who had done it to them before” (10). A student acting out against a teacher may instead be acting out against the assumption that he or she must value the texts chosen for him or her. The specific texts and their respective values are not relevant here, but the act of reproduction of a world view (ideology) is.

Looking to Althusser is again useful in defining ideology and its implications. He claims that, while “ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (1498), it is essential to acknowledge that “ideology has a material existence” (1500). What is at stake then is not just an individualized take on morality or a personal journey for the “meaning of life,” but rather the formation and propagation of entire cultures. In religious terms, if one is taught the ideology found in the pages of the Bible versus the ideology found in the Koran, the effect on that person’s life and community will manifest in very different ways. And, as is seen every day
across the news, many are willing to kill and die to preserve the communities that have been built off these texts. It is no wonder, then, that there are similarly impassioned battles over what students read and how they are taught to regard those readings. Furthermore, teachers could perhaps understand students’ indignation if those students are being asked to accept a culture they do not believe in, or have at least been alienated from.

Louis Althusser postulates that a productive society must “reproduce the conditions of production” (1484) or, in other words, society must create a system that will sustain the way that society functions. Schools are not just an integral part of maintaining this system but “the educational apparatus [is] in fact the dominant ideological State apparatus” (1494). Traditionally, schools have not been put in place to challenge citizens to grow, but create citizens that will reiterate traditional cultural values. Rather than declaring, “Knowledge is power!” it may be more accurate to state, “The regulation of knowledge is power!” Common rhetoric touts education’s ability to create opportunities and enlightenment for the disenfranchised student, but these grandiose assertions should perhaps come with a disclaimer: “The school…teaches ‘know how’, but in forms which ensure subjection to the ruling ideology or the mastery of its ‘practice’” (1485). The students’ access to knowledge is regulated. The only knowledge given to students is knowledge that does not threaten but rather propagates the status quo. Another way to approach this system of reproduction is in terms of Paulo Freire’s “banking system.” Freire describes education as “an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and teacher is the depositor” (72). The ideology of the State is the currency being deposited. This strengthens the image of a cold, metal factory that robs students of agency and can help one understand the students’ subversive attempts of reclaiming that agency. Freire goes on to say, “Worse yet, it turns them into ‘containers,’ into ‘receptacles’ to be ‘filled’ by the teacher. The more completely she fills the receptacles, the better a teacher she is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better the students they are” (72). The potential of a student is measured only in terms that support the objectives of the scholastic institution and, more importantly, the government that gives credence to that institution.
Another way to look at the subjugation of students is through the disturbing analogy of slavery. In 1969, reacting to the type of institutions described by Freire and Althusser, Jerry Farber unapologetically declared: “Students are niggers,” further illustrating what becomes of students placed through the machinery of the schools. Farber describes his students as having “slave mentality: obliging and ingratiating on the surface but hostile and resistant underneath” (Student 93). This supports both Eagleton and Althusser's observation of the school's ability to subdue the student population, and explains the latent hostility depicted by Shor and Brookes. Farber insists that this “slave mentality” is the foremost goal of the educational system as he claims that schools “don’t let [students] graduate until they’ve demonstrated their willingness—over 16 years—to remain slaves” (Student 99). This analogy is particularly powerful because it demonstrates the dehumanization that occurs as a result of traditional schooling. The consequences of an oppressive pedagogy are more serious than student boredom or teacher frustration. When participants of the school system realize that, as Farber insists, “we’re all more or less niggers and slaves, teachers and students alike” (Student 99), hopefully the urgency of liberation from this tradition is felt.

And so, we must change the tradition. Of course government funding, economic growth, policy-making, parental attitudes, etc. all play a role in changing the course of education. However, just as Althusser insists that schools are the most crucial site for ideological indoctrination, Freire believes that schools have the most potential to liberate subjects from this harmful process. Summarizing Freire’s mission, Peter Mclaren explains, “For Freire the most important sites for resisting enslavement to ideological machineries of servitude are the schools” (23). Teachers must begin to liberate themselves and students at the point where the enslavement begins, that is, the moment the students begin to be educated about the world. With an alternate pedagogy, such as engaged pedagogy, a new role is created for educators and McLaren asserts that “teachers need to recognize how much their personal histories, ideological assumptions, and Eurocentric and patriarchal narrative forms (not to mention those of their students) are grounded in liberal capitalism” (16). Teachers can no longer be exempt from the lessons of the classroom, but must fully engage in the process of engaged pedagogy, participating alongside their students in critical thinking.
To place the traditional pedagogy that McLaren refers to in a specific context, Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux argue that this process was in the forefront during the years of the Reagan/Bush administration (1981-89). In a backlash against the radical Civil Rights movements of the previous two decades, the Reagan administration ushered in a return to “traditional values” and gave birth to what many call the “Culture Wars.” These values were to be instilled by the schools and the schools “became institutions for moral regulation and character education in which family values, moral fundamentalism, and a Great Books ethic reasserted a nostalgic and mythic view of what it meant to be a citizen in the New World Order” (2). The legacy of this movement will be furthered expanded upon in the next chapter with a look at the work of Lynne Cheney, who also played an active role during this era. The Reagan administration supported the notion of the schools’ obligation to reproduce a patriotic labor market and “within this discourse, nationalism and Eurocentrism combined as part of a broader attempt to promote and legitimatize a ‘common culture’ in which cultural diversity rather than intolerance was seen as the ‘enemy’ of democracy. The result was a notion of schooling that was at odds with educating all students to learn how to govern rather than be governed” (2). This meant “injecting into the school curricula the kind of patriotic commercial fervor that would shut up and serve in the new army of service sector workers or simply disappear into the ranks of the unemployed and homeless” (8). The schools embraced the passive and predetermined identity of the students since this allowed national unity (particularly against Communism) to flourish.

Within a country that is continually shaped and re-shaped by immigration, the reproduction of national identity is central to any discussion of pedagogy. Are educational institutions creating American culture for students or are students asked to construct their own American identity? While it may be rare to hear the perfection of a country, a government, or race extolled, the superiority and righteousness of these entities are commonplace, wrapped up in patriotism, piety, and ethnic pride. One does not have to look far for examples of how these ideologies have been reproduced to tragic ends: witch hunts, eugenics, gender superiority. Any student of American history can easily rattle off these now “dark age” ideologies. The same student might say such problems are merely a thing of the past, while heated debates about same-sex marriage,
teaching Creationism, and immigration reform rage across the nation. It is naïve to think our schools are immune to the reproduction of harmful ideologies. The reproduction of one worldview can help us begin to further understand the desire for revolt as sung by Pink Floyd. The lyrics “We don’t need no thought control” take on greater meaning when one begins to question what kind of worldview and indoctrination has been taking place in our schools. According to Richter, “it becomes clear that traditional educational methods are essentially conservative, providing a philosophical and historical foundation for a society that has always been deeply racist, sexist, homophobic, and…far more committed to class privilege than to equality” (22). Thus, the revolt against becoming “just another brick in the wall” becomes a revolt against assimilation into a racist, sexist, homophobic, and classist society.

However, despite the deeply problematic relationships entrenched in State run education, this paper is not arguing for the abolishment of schools (nor does it necessarily argue against it). Although Aronowitz and Giroux thoroughly admonish American policy with similar language to Althusser, they also note the limits of the Marxist critique of education. One such limit is the failure to acknowledge the possibility of “counter-hegemony” in schools in order to transform the schools into a site of resistance. Aronowitz and Giroux translate the Marxist argument that Althusser is a part of in this way:

Thus, school knowledge within capitalist society is an instrument of ruling class power, because it reproduces the ideology that in this society individuals possess not only rights, such as school attendance, but also equal opportunity to advance the social ladder. School knowledge is viewed negatively as an instrument of domination; therefore, given the structural limits imposed by bourgeois hegemony, the chance for genuine education through schooling is virtually nil. (18)

According to Aronowitz and Giroux, this attitude “ignores the degree to which popular forces might appropriate the democratic ideology of schools” (18). If one buys into the absolute control of the State over students, then the only effective solution would be to do away with educational institutions altogether, “for if school knowledge, governance, and finances are, for all practical purposes, subsumed under the capitalist state and the state is an instrument for ruling class domination, what possible perspectives for political struggle are there within the educational sector?” (18). While there are valid arguments
for the abolishment of these institutions, I would like to entertain the notion that there are
elements worth salvaging in the school system.\footnote{Returning to the significance of student of resistance, Brooke points out that “most forms of underlife are [contained]—they work around the institution to assert the actor’s difference from the assigned role, rather than working for the elimination of the institution” (723). It is interesting to note that even when students seem aggressively against the classroom environment, they work within that environment, showing that their actions are perhaps attempts to \textit{transform} the environment, not do away with it.} After all, if the traditional mode of
education was wholly successful at homogenizing and molding students into complacent citizens, we would not have to debate how to deal with the myriad displays of student rebellion. Furthermore, if schools were wholly negative, why would so many marginalized groups tirelessly fight to be included in the struggle for education?

Following Pink Floyd’s analogy of the wall, it would seem that the education system is a flawed structure that continues to crack. In tearing down the existing wall, we do not have to discard its materials altogether. Some of the material may still be valuable in re-imagining and constructing something new. Once educators acknowledge the historical intentions of the U.S. educational system, and Literary Studies in particular, they can begin to understand the resentment students inherit from this system and work to resolve these tensions.

It is critical, though, to note that this argument rests on the assumption that our cultural norms are socially constructed and that cultural values are subjective to those who hold onto them. In other words, resisting forced cultural reproduction presupposes that one does not rely on universal Truths. Instructors who depend on the rhetoric of Truth resist engaged pedagogy on the grounds that it undermines their responsibility to transmit great Truths to the next generation. Upon closer examination, however, the argument for Truth can be read as a smokescreen for a specific political agenda based in fear. The myth of Truth is an obstacle that must be overcome to fully embrace engaged pedagogy.
CHAPTER 3

TRUTH AS A WALL TO PROGRESS

Engaged pedagogy asks students, educators, and society to deconstruct what is assumed knowledge and become comfortable working in uncertain, perhaps empty spaces. This can induce anxiety when the things we are used to talking about, the assumptions that we are used to relying on, are taken away. How do we complete a shelter, stability and walls when engaged pedagogy insists on continually breaking down, rebuilding, and once again breaking down those walls? It is because of this anxiety and need for stability that walls are so easily put up under the guise of Truth. Truths speak to something visceral in individuals and communities. They are often based on faith, on gut instinct, on what is simply “common sense.” However, the construction of what is “common” must begin somewhere, and must be propagated. It is has fallen upon educators to be the keepers of this common sense, and it has traditionally been their responsibility to keep a culture’s Truths alive. Foucault characterizes the academics that make up the universities, stating, “To be intellectual meant something like being the conscious/conscience of us all” (1667). In simpler terms, an intellectual (who most often is called upon to teach) is the “spokesman of the universal.” Part of this responsibility is communicating “universality in its conscious, elaborated form” to “the proletariat and the masses” (1667).

However, Foucault complicates the idea that the Truth is synonymous with the universal. He claims that rather, “it is produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media); lastly, it is the issue of a whole political debate social confrontation (‘ideological' struggles)” (1669). Expanding on Althusser's claim that the State uses schools to spread ideology which controls the population, Foucault specifies that this ideology is presented as the Truth. As we will soon see, many insist that ideology and Truth are in opposition to one another. The question then that must be asked is what delineates one from the other? While Foucault and Althusser would say
that both ideology and Truth are constructions of how humans experience the world, the rhetorical difference here is a matter of power. Ideology can be argued as subjective, relative to the individual. The Truth, on the other hand, is supposedly not dependent on human experience; it is universal; it is beyond questioning. Anyone can formulate a personal ideology, but it is more difficult to comprehend a universal Truth. With this representation of ideology versus Truth, a hierarchy is built, and with it positions of power. If intellectuals are indeed the “spokesmen of the universal,” then they are invaluable to the rest of society who must turn to them to grasp these ideals.  

Foucault calls into question this first characterization of the intellectual and further emphasizes the power relation that it embodies. The intellectual (and for my purposes, the instructor) “is the person occupying a specific position—but whose specificity is linked, in a society like ours, to the general functioning of an apparatus of truth” (1669). While the previous chapter was concerned with the broader goals of the educational system that the instructor works in, we can now turn to a more focused analysis of how the instructor supports the overall apparatus and in turn prevents a more effective student-teacher relationship. Traditionally, teachers have less of a responsibility to the students and more of a responsibility to the State to ensure it functions properly. Teachers are in a position to present the power structures in place as “natural” or as “true.”

As different cultures vary in their value systems, their religions, policies, and modes of government, the Truth that teachers possess will also vary, not just according to country, but sub-cultures and social locations within the U.S. This is because “each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true” (1668). Linking politics to Truth returns to the previous question of how one distinguishes an ideology from Truth and also introduces an important player in this pedagogical discussion. Some of the most vocal detractors of engaged pedagogy are policy makers and government officials. While I would like to focus on the immediate and local interactions between student and teacher, neither exists without political parties that have an invested interest in the outcome of the

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10 There is an inherent contradiction here. If the Truth is “universal,” how then is it accessible only to a select few?
student-teacher relationship. Foucault asserts:

There is a battle “for truth”, or at least “around truth”—it being understood once again that by truth I do not mean “the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted,” but rather “the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted,” but rather “the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true,” it being understood also that it's not a matter of a battle 'on behalf' of the truth, but of a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays. It is necessary to think of the political problems of intellectuals not in terms of “science” and “ideology,” but in terms of “truth” and “power.” (1669)

Thus, one of the greatest obstacles to engaged pedagogy and to the future of the Humanities\footnote{It will be established that it is Liberal Arts and Humanities departments that are the most affected by notions of Truth and are the target of Conservative reform.} is this debate surrounding Truth. It is a loaded term: defined, redefined, challenged and disputed, but most alarming, it is a term aimed to quell any challenge. By definition, the Truth is an absolute and an absolute cannot be modified, cannot progress. I will not decide for my readers whether or not there is an external Truth out there to be discovered. I am more concerned with Foucault's assertion that this debate is not a debate “on behalf of the truth” but rather how the truth is manipulated to excuse oppressive traditions and, more specifically, how it prevents teachers from using engaged pedagogy.

Constructing any discourse that favors a static power structure creates a wall for the intellectual community. Truth is used, whether consciously or sub-consciously, as a weapon against progress. The rhetoric of Truth is used in many sectors, but one clear example of how Truth is employed in powerful ways in the realm of education is by the Conservative Right. While many educators may not fully align themselves with the politics of this group, examining Conservative rhetoric reveals broader tendencies to rely on Truth. Thus, it is necessary to look at how the Conservative Right wields one version of the Truth in order to maintain the traditional trajectory of education and consequently encourage the adversarial relationship of the teacher and student.

On one side of the pedagogical spectrum are those who above all else reach for objectivity in the classroom and they employ a certain language. Stanley Fish identifies two distinct languages that are in opposition to one another. There is, “on the one hand,
language that faithfully reflects or reports on matters of fact uncolored by any personal or partisan agenda or desire; and on the other hand, language that is infected by partisan agendas and desires, and therefore colors and distorts the facts which it purports to reflect” (474). The construction of these languages is wrapped up in approaches to Truth. Objectivity is another way to describe the first type of language Fish identifies:

The idea is that such language, purged of ambiguity, redundancy, and indirection, will be an appropriate instrument for the registering of an independent reality, and men will only submit themselves to that language and remain within the structure of its stipulated definitions and exclusions, they will be incapable of formulating and expressing wayward, subjective thoughts and will cease to be a danger either to themselves or to those who hearken to them. (477)

Within this language, the speaker is able to step back, remove their biased persona from the situation and observe “reality.” An “independent reality” is synonymous to an external singular Truth. Traditionally, this language has been favored in the educational forum. Students and teachers are expected to take an objective approach to the subject matter in order to better understand the Truth. The Conservative Right embraces this language, and rejects the language of “subjective thoughts,” which marks the more liberal Left. They accuse liberal educators of using the second type of language “infected by partisan agendas,” which they identify as “ideological,” while boasting they objective language reflects the Truth. As the despair of Modernism has evolved into the skepticism of Post-Modernism, the ability to be objective and the existence of Truth has been greatly called into question by many, creating a bitter war between traditional and progressive pedagogy.

Author and former chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities Lynne V. Cheney becomes a champion for the Truth in her book, appropriately named Telling The Truth. She attacks Post-Modern scholars, whom she describes as believing that “Truth and beauty and excellence are… irrelevant” (Truth 13). According to Cheney, for these scholars, “the key questions are thought to be about gender, race, and

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While Cheney insists in “American Memory: A Report on the Humanities in the Nation’s Public Schools” that, “responsibility for this report and its conclusions is mine alone,” she draws on contributions from over forty people who lend their names to the report. In addition, throughout Telling the Truth she positions herself as someone encouraged to speak out on behalf of her community (particularly on Truth 75). For this reason and her extensive posts/experiences within Conservative organizations, I use her findings to be fairly indicative of the Conservative Right.
class. What groups did the authors of these works represent? How did their books enhance the social power of those groups over others?” (Truth 13-14). These are the questions that I have already asked instructors to ask of themselves in my first chapter in order begin to transcend an oppressive classroom environment. Yet, Cheney believes that positions such as these create students who are “cosmopolitan” and who believe that “this nation deserves no special support” (Truth 30). According to Cheney, a diverse world outlook and a critical approach to patriotism are negative attributes, because educators “will have accomplished these ends at the cost of truth—a truth, moreover that calls into question the wisdom of the political goals that [liberal educators] advance” (Truth 30). The Truth, for Cheney, is paramount in education. Anything that detracts from or questions this Truth has no place in education, which places engaged pedagogy at the heart of Conservative attacks.

What remains to be seen is what exactly this Truth contains that is so important. For the Conservative Right, it is a specific history and value system that must be protected in the United States. The emphasis is placed on curriculum rather than pedagogy, which automatically constructs a wall towards engaged pedagogy. As will be expanded on later, it does not matter how one teaches when the teacher holds the keys to the Truth. The relationship between teacher and student, the experience one gains, and the environment in which one learns are all secondary to the primary goal of memorizing the accomplishments of the U.S. and extolling the great Western tradition that inspired such accomplishments. Claiming to know and be able to transmit the Truth allows instructors to sidestep concerns about pedagogy. Because of this, it may often seem as though Conservatives and Liberals are having two different arguments about education. Before teachers can be convinced that it is necessary to look critically at teaching praxis, teachers must see how relying on curricula founded on Truths fails and oppresses students.

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13 Jarratt clearly demonstrates the type of scholar Cheney refers to when Jarratt claims, “[postcolonial theory] demands that scholars and teachers of literature and literacies ask rhetorical questions the answers to which had been for many years assumed: who speaks? On behalf of whom? Who is listening? And how? It interrogates the assumption of any group of identification and more specifically the relationship of the single ‘I’ to a collective ‘we’” (1381).
One thing that the Far Right and engaged pedagogy agree on is that cultural memory is most importantly transmitted through the schools (American 5). What is not agreed upon is the validity of memory. Which memories are “true”? In her 1987 publication “American Memory: A Report on the Humanities in the Nation’s Public Schools,” Cheney, argues:

Our students… need to understand our democratic institutions, to know their origins in Western thought, to be familiar with how and why other cultures have evolved differently from our own. They need to read great works of literature, thus confronting questions of good and evil, freedom and responsibility that have determined the character of people and nations. (American 10)

“Great,” “good and evil,” “character”: these words are never defined; they are taken for granted. What is also taken for granted is that “our democratic institutions” and students’ “origins” are all the same, are all rooted in Western Civilization. This version of the Truth is often repeated. Note the similarity of Cheney’s words to Richard Huber explaining a course on “What Makes an American”:

The narrative of this core curriculum begins with Greek philosophers reflecting on the governing of a democratic society and the characteristics of beauty, continues with the contributions of the Roman Empire to engineering and the law, while the Jews bequeath their revelation about one God, and the Christians pronounce an obedience to universal ethics. The story continues into the Middle Ages, then to the awakenings in the Renaissance and Reformation followed by the revolutionary protests of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. While the assigned texts emphasize the emergence of ideas, the narrative connects those ideas to key political and economic events. The dramatic denouement to the story is how the New World inherited the values of Western Civilization and transformed that inheritance into the meaning of American Civilization. (1)

The goal of this curriculum is that “all students would begin their junior year on campus with a common understanding of the foundations upon which their values are constructed” (2). According to Huber, this, in a nut shell, is our origins, our history, our values, what makes each of us American. This attitude has obvious appeal: it reflects a unified, cohesive population. Over the vast continent of U.S., there is the hope that we can at least share the Truth of America. This Truth is apparently not controversial, unlike the “special interests” and opinions of such groups as Native Americans, feminists, Atheists, recent immigrants, queer and cultural studies, just to name a few. These groups’ values, in fact, undermine the Truth.
“Intellectual Diversity,” a publication of ACTA,\textsuperscript{14} states this position clearly, arguing, “Today, the notion of truth and objectivity is regarded by many professors as antiquated and an obstacle to social change. In this ‘postmodern’ view, all ideas are political, the classroom is an appropriate place for advocacy, and students should be molded into ‘change agents’ to promote a political agenda” (Intellectual 2-3). Truth and objectivity, absolutes, are \textit{not} political, \textit{not} advocating any particular viewpoint. Cheney mirrors this sentiment. Lamenting the past couple decades in education, she states, “A new group of academics was coming into power who viewed the humanities as a political tool, a weapon to be wielded in a variety of causes, but most especially multiculturalism and feminism” (Truth 15). This implies that the Conservative view of the humanities is not political, is not a cause.

However, a closer look at Huber's curriculum complicates the claim that it lacks political agenda. First, let’s look at the statement that the United States’ foundation is based on Greek philosophy. Cheney devotes a great amount of discussion to the controversy of this statement. She admits (rather reluctantly) that “Egypt influenced Greece” and that “Afrocentric teaching commonly implies not only that Egypt was a black nation, but that it provided the Greeks with their culture and that scholars of European descent, driven by racist impulse, try to cover this up” (Truth 48). Whether or not one agrees with Afrocentric teachings and whether or not one agrees that Egypt influenced Greece does not matter. The inclusion of the controversy over Greek influence begs the question, how is insisting that this statement is true not a political agenda? How can one disparagingly employ the term “Afrocentric” and so blatantly ignore the implications of a curriculum being “Eurocentric”? Cheney claims, “The principles of freedom and liberty… have inspired our political systems” (Truth 30). It makes sense that the origins of these principles have political meaning.

Secondly, I will avoid Huber's highly loaded claim that “the Christians pronounce an obedience to universal ethics” and focus instead on the slightly more benign statement that “the New World inherited the values of Western Civilization.” The word choice of “inherit” here is an example of how a simple “fact” can be pregnant with political

\textsuperscript{14} American Council of Trustees and Alumni: self-described as “tax-exempt, nonprofit, educational organization committed to academic freedom, excellence and accountability at America’s colleges and universities.” For more information, visit www.goacta.org.
motivations and the ability to alienate entire civilizations. Would a Native American student embrace the notion that Western values were an “inheritance” rather than near genocide for Native American tribes? Would a Japanese American student, proud of Japanese influence in American culture, appreciate only recognizing Western values while ignoring Eastern Asian philosophies and contributions? Although many will say latching onto a single, innocuous word like “inheritance” is focusing on insignificant semantics, it is exactly this type of rhetoric that allows the Right to mask Truths as apolitical, sweeping the damaging ideologies they contain under the rug. Althusser addresses this tendency to equate a reigning ideology as apolitical, arguing:

The mechanisms which produce this vital result for the capitalist regime are naturally covered up and concealed by a universally reigning ideology of the School, universally reigning because it is one of the essential forms of the ruling bourgeois ideology: an ideology which represents the School as a neutral environment purged of ideology. (1495)

Insisting that the ideology being reproduced within the schools system is neutral, or True, makes it much more difficult for dissenters to demand change. If an educator buys into the rhetoric that knowledge exists outside of controversy or human interpretation, and that this knowledge must be bestowed upon unenlightened students, then that educator has every right to be in control while the student has absolutely no right to question the Truth. Thus, Truth is not used for enlightenment but rather power. Foucault echoes this sentiment, arguing, “Truth is isn’t outside power, or lacking power, Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint” (1668). Cheney and others are claiming that the absolute Truth they understand is not an ideology, but a reality. On the contrary, it appears neutral only because it is established.

Furthermore, Truth as a cornerstone for education is called upon to maintain American “morality” by the Conservative Right, which also makes it more difficult for teachers to resist this rhetoric in the classroom. Accepting an award from ACTA, Professor Gertrude Himmelfarb’s speech “Sovereignty of Truth” addresses what makes for academic excellence. Himmelfarb proposes, “I would like to add another ingredient (or perhaps two ingredients) into this recipe for excellence—morality. And morality not for its own sake but for the sake of truth.” Thus, education and its pursuit of Truth are indelibly tied to a student's moral character. Once again, this statement in and of itself may not seem objectionable, until one realizes that “morality” and “Truth” within
Conservative rhetoric severely limits those who can be counted as “moral” and “knowledgeable.” The Truth, according to the Conservative Right, begins with what should be valued. Greek philosophy, democracy, Christianity, etc.: these are things education should begin with, working its way backwards into how these ideals work for students’ (and society’s) benefit.

It is this struggle between how and what students learn that demonstrates one of the clearest ways in which Truth manifests in pedagogy. Engaged pedagogy, suspicious that content can ever be permanently confirmed, is more concerned with teaching students how to critically and responsibly think. In other words, instead of emphasizing what an argument claims, or emphasizing what is True, engaged pedagogy asks students to examine the different ways the argument is formed. Students focus on what an argument asks them to assume, what it asks them to ignore, what values it is playing off of, etc. On the other hand, those concerned with the Truth will emphasize what, specifically, is being claimed and whether or not that claim is valued. Cheney attacks the former approach in this way: “The culprit is ‘process’—the belief that we can teach our children how to think without troubling to learn anything worth thinking about, the belief that we can teach them how to understand the world in which they live without conveying to them the events and ideas that have brought it into existence” (American 5). The word “worth” is important here. Cheney would have students begin with something “worthwhile” and then work to understand it. First there is Truth, then there is knowledge of that Truth. Conversely, engaged pedagogy works through what is known and unknown in an attempt to establish worth from the process.

According to Cheney, the danger of not ascertaining the Truth or the worth of a subject is cheapening education. She claims that in “conveying no notion that some kinds of knowledge are more important than others,” education places subjects such as “jewelry making” and “blanket crocheting” on par with national history and great literature (9). What is assumed in this analogy is that the only lesson or end product that

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15 Diane Ravitch's op-ed “Critical Thinking? You Need Knowledge” (2009) echoes this attitude, claiming, “For over a century we have numbed the brains of teachers with endless blather about process and abstract thinking skills.” While rightly claiming “Thinking critically involves comparing and contrasting and synthesizing what one has learned,” she grossly misrepresents supporters of critical thinking-based pedagogy and “experiential” learning.”
comes from jewelry making is a necklace or a pair of gaudy earrings. After all, that is the tangible Truth that would come out of a class of that nature. At first glance, Cheney has provided a sensible argument. Many could easily argue that it is “true” that jewelry is not as relevant as studying the facts about the United States’ political foundations. However, that Truth is challenged when one examines the issue from the standpoint of engaged pedagogy. For example, no attention has been paid to the process of jewelry making, the importance of how one was able to make a necklace.\(^\text{16}\) Were mechanics and mathematical measurements used to figure out how to fasten the necklace? What about creativity and self-expression? Were those qualities built up in the student? Was the student asked to take into consideration the social value of the necklace and respond to the aesthetic values of the society that the necklace would be presented to? Within the hands-on experience of jewelry making, was the student given any historical context, taught how jewelry speaks to status and class rank? If a student was indeed taught all of these things through the process of jewelry making, does the Truth about the value of that course differ at all? Engaged pedagogy allows for educators to take any subject, text, or “fact” and ask critical questions about it in order to reach an educational moment. What is terrifying about education based on process rather than Truth is that the outcome is uncertain.

It is this uncertainty that leads many educators to resist engaged pedagogy. John Agresto, president of St. John’s College in Santa Fe, mocks the idea that Liberal Arts educators should ask their students to be critical or to ask questions, saying, “I should pay all that money just to have my most cherished beliefs undermined, my faith cast into doubt, and my parents and country undermined? I don’t think so” (11). Apparently, it is unacceptable to critically examine one's beliefs. The process of questioning is automatically equated to subversion. It is seen as a threat. The fear of challenging his beliefs is explicit in his warning: “Begin with radical doubt and see what ideas and institutions are left standing after you’ve called them into account. Church, family, government, charity…question them all. Having done this, then perhaps one’s own

\(^{16}\) Mary Louise Pratt’s essay “Arts of the Contact Zone” also demonstrates an example of successful process-driven learning through her son’s interest in baseball: “Literacy began for Sam with the newly pronounceable names on the picture cards and brought him what has been easily the broadest, most varied, most enduring, and most integrated experience of his thirteen-year life” (33).
views will shine” (Agresto 12). Institutions such as churches, government, traditional family structure: these are the “cherished beliefs” that should not be “undermined.” Ironically, these are also the sites of some of the most egregious oppression. These are the sites that are so terrified of engaged pedagogy.

Because of the history of schools and governments as tools of oppression, engaged pedagogy wants to deconstruct the Truth in order to create a different future. Stephen Balch poses this as a problem, arguing, “The left, to vastly but usefully simplify, is about visions of change, while the right is about protecting things as they are” (7). He is, of course, very correct in this assertion. Engaged pedagogy (associated with “the left”) is rooted in the belief that social change, positive social change, can be achieved through education. Balch, however, hopes that such change will never take place, claiming, “The flabbiness, trivialization, and incoherence of so many academic orthodoxies, the very nature of postmodernism’s métier, opens the real possibility of their destabilization once serious internal debate gets underway” (3). The “incoherent academic orthodoxies” that Balch is referring to are the pedagogical practices of Humanities or Liberal Arts. The “flabbiness” he identifies is merely the difference between the rigidity of an “objective” language and a language that allows for levels of relativity. Balch and Agresto's discussion betrays the motivations behind the Conservative Right's obsession with Truth in education as a fear of instability.

Instability has negative connotations in our society, while balance, safety, and certainty are valued. Recognizing the previously established claim that “[authority's] aim, in the West, has traditionally been to control or gain power over others,” Chandra Talpade Mohanty asserts that one effect of traditional pedagogy is standardization of behaviors and responses so as to make them predictable (and thus manageable) across a wide variety of situations and circumstances. If complex structural experiences of domination and resistance can be ideologically reformulated as individual behaviors and attitudes, they can be managed while carrying on business as usual. (210)

Here, Mohanty is referring to institutions' tendency to write off hostile student reactions as mere individual, psychological problems, which can be dealt with on individual, psychological levels without assessing the system as a whole. This allows institutions to ignore issues of race or gender that would disrupt, or worse, undermine the authority of the classroom. hooks echoes this sentiment, more simply stating that “the unwillingness
to approach teaching from a standpoint that includes awareness of race, sex, and class is often rooted in the fear classrooms will be uncontrollable, that emotions and passions will not be contained” (39). Thus, the need to control ideologies through transferable universal Truths is justified in the name of “classroom management.” This is why instructors stick to modes of teaching that do not welcome instability into the curriculum. Who knows how thirty students crammed into a room will react to questions about racial identity, violent revolt, religious extremism, family politics, etc? Will it become a screaming match? Will students burst into tears? How do teachers control questions that they do not have a concrete answer to? Or, if a teacher is unlucky enough to be faced with a student that questions the Truths presented, the teacher is able to attribute that student's reaction as a “personal hang-up” or “behavior problem.”

What many educators fail to recognize is the negative consequences of forcing the dynamic activity of learning into a stable, mechanical, process. Freire explains that, within traditional pedagogy, “The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable….His task is to ‘fill’ the students with contents of his narration—contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance” (71). The attempt to “stabilize” education comes at the cost of knowledge that has significance to the immediate lives of the students. Approaching knowledge as a set of clear-cut, preconceived categories limits both the student’s and teacher’s abilities to explore, to grow, and to communicate. It requires that students and teachers constantly filter and edit how they understand the world, which creates an incomplete education.

Looking back at the language Althusser, Freire, and others use to characterize traditional modes of teaching, such as reproduction, deposit, receptacles, functioning and so on, one may notice that this rhetoric conjures up the imagery of a machine. In fact, Althusser explicitly claims, “The State [and thus its institutions such as the school] is a ‘machine’ of repression” (1487). Traditional schooling, with its fixation on a stable Truth, translates to the treatment of students and teachers as cogs in a machine. While machines may be efficient, predictable, and safe, they cannot adapt, adjust, or grow outside of what they have been programmed to do and therefore, cannot be responsible for the educational needs of humans. Employing conventional methods of teaching is not
just participating in exclusionary cultural reproduction; it perpetuates dehumanization and validates choices made out of fear. Freire maintains, “Sooner or later being less human leads the oppressed to struggle against those who made them so” (44). It is inevitable that students will struggle against the system that has made them less than human. But teachers do not have to be part of that system that “made them so.” Therefore, instead of fighting against students' humanity in the classroom and attempting to contain it and shove it into compartmentalized Truths out of fear, engaged pedagogy embraces the messiness of the human and harnesses the transformative power of humanizing education. Of course, the question then becomes: How does one humanize the classroom?

One key in answering this question is restoring the body to the educational process. The human body is perhaps one of the greatest sources of fear and therefore the most controlled. However, without consideration for the body, engaged pedagogy would not be able to adequately remedy student-teacher relationships or re-imagine a more rewarding education.
CHAPTER 4
THE FEAR AND POWER OF AN EMBODIED EDUCATION

Writing in regards to the oppressed, Freire claims, “In order to regain their humanity they must cease to be things and fight as men and women. This is a radical requirement” (68). Additionally, Freire argues that, in becoming men and women, the oppressed must become a community working towards the same goals. He goes on to say, “The pursuit of full humanity, however, cannot be carried out in isolation or individualism but only in fellowship and solidarity; therefore it cannot unfold in the antagonistic relations between oppressors and oppressed” (85). Ultimately, the purpose of recognizing the oppressive tradition of education and rethinking the validity of universal Truth is to reclaim the humanity of students who have been, and are still, treated as objects in a mechanical system rather than humans in a chaotic world. Furthermore, an educational community based on fostering each others' humanity cannot and will not tolerate unhealthy separations between an oppressor (the teacher) and the oppressed (students). Thus, the most radical and difficult task of the instructor who wishes to transform the educational system is to humanize their classroom. But what does it mean to “humanize”? There are many ways to approach and define “humanity” but I would like to focus on the relationship of mind and body and argue that, without the body, teachers cannot sufficiently educate the minds of their students, nor can they fully participate in engaged pedagogy. Yet incorporating something as uncertain and chaotic as the body into teaching is exactly what may be most fearful for teachers. After reiterating the connection between an embodied education and engaged pedagogy, this chapter will use the scholarship of Jerry Farber to set up two distinct and interwoven fears instructors have of their students. It will then more specifically illustrate one example of how using the body as an educational may play out in the classroom, eliciting the aforementioned fears. From that example, I will dissect how these fears have been constructed through a dualistic approach to the mind and body and argue that such an
approach is debilitating to a successful education. While acknowledging instructors’ fear of an unpredictable classroom, I will posit that engaged pedagogy allows the instructors to embrace the educational possibilities of an embodied classroom, rather than ignore or repress its complexities.

Margaret Macintyre Latta and Buck Gayle, in their article "Enfleshing Embodiment: ‘Falling Into Trust’ With the Body's Role in Teaching and Learning,” recognize the importance of the body to educators whose goal is to empower previously fragmented communities. The authors claim that “within embodiment’s very nature, it holds radical implications for the preoccupation with connected knowledge, learning, and teaching” (316). Like Freire, Macintyre Latta and Gayle are convinced that paramount to the process of education must be relationships. They go a step further and stress that “embodiment is elemental to human beings” (316). While traditional pedagogy manufactures students as objects, an embodied, engaged pedagogy does not allow instructors to forget that students are foremost human beings. Without concern for the body, the vocation of humanization is not possible. The authors argue, “To disregard the potential power of embodied teaching and learning is inhuman, undermining learners, teachers, and what it means to educate” (325). However, despite the dehumanizing effects of repressing the body within education, instructors are often hesitant, if not wholly opposed, to integrating the body into their daily classroom. Macintyre Latta and Gayle recognize this resistance towards an embodied education, claiming that “the power of our bodies to form and inform self and other(s) continues to be marginalized, perhaps feared” (324). Much of this fear comes from the unknown, the unpredictability and messiness of the human body.

Before delving further into the centrality of the body in engaged pedagogy, I would like to revisit the idea that the fear of instability is the impetus for controlling students by returning to Farber's declaration that students are slaves. Much of the problematic justification of slavery by the Antebellum South was rooted in the plantation owners' fear of African Americans, both sexually and as a large population that could revolt against the wealthy few. Similarly, Farber recognizes, “The general timidity which causes teachers to make niggers of their students usually includes a more specific fear—fear of the students themselves” (Student 95). He suggests that this fear of the students,
like plantation owners' fear of their slaves, is both a sexual threat and a threat to educators' authority. Together these two fears create a strange Catch-22. First, Farber claims, “The less trained and the less socialized a person is, the more he constitutes a sexual threat and the more he will be subjugated by institutions, such as penitentiaries and schools” (Student 96). In other words, students are a sexual threat because they are not yet “properly” educated to the standards of society and consequently will be repressed. Putting aside the sexual aspect of the threat that I will return to later, this attitude is illustrated in the derisive responses towards allowing students to make classroom decisions. The suggestion that students become free to choose their own research topic or lead a class discussion is followed with the argument that students cannot be trusted to make appropriate choices. The theory is that students do not have the wherewithal to adequately pursue their own academic interests, so they must be spoon fed to them. Nor do students have the tact to have substantial conversations with their peers without a faculty moderator. The initial fear is that, since students are, by nature, not yet educated, giving them power has dangerous results. This fear is quelled by the fact that the teacher is there to dutifully socialize the student through traditional pedagogy.

This leads to the second fear. If fully educated, if the teacher is successful in his/her task, Farber points out that “students, like black people, have immense unused power. They could, theoretically, insist on participating in their own education” (Student 100). It happens every semester: the first couple weeks, students timidly sit in their seats, staring up at the professor, passively absorbing the knowledge presented to them. Yet, as midterms come closer, the students (hopefully) begin to grasp the concepts, become comfortable with their newfound lessons and become more demanding of the teacher. The knowledge and the process of the classroom is more frequently challenged, more questions are asked, more liberties are taken. At this point, the instructor becomes vulnerable. Their authority is tenuous. For example, each semester I instruct my students to become informed citizens by paying attention to the political climate, to local events, and drawing connections to their personal lives. And, each semester at least one student goes above and beyond my expectations, arriving to class with an arsenal of questions: What is the process of trying to repeal the Health Care Reform Bill and what
will the implications of this bill be for me in the next couple years? How is our university reacting to the recent racial tensions in the city? Can we spend class time debating the credibility of claims that 9/11 was manufactured by the government? I don't have the answers to all these questions and, while I am impressed with my students' participation, I become uneasy that I have lost control over their knowledge, knowledge that may surpass my own in some areas. If students demand to take control of their education, the traditional role of the educator can easily be destabilized. This conundrum reinforces the theory that the actual goal of educational institutions is not to enlighten students but rather subjugate and condition students in order to diffuse a threatening population. It becomes particularly threatening when this lack of control includes the body, especially in regards to sex.

Many instructors may resist the implication that they consider students sexually threatening. They may also insist that they are not afraid of student participation at all and furthermore, may question how, practically speaking, the body has a place in the classroom. In order to illustrate Farber's argument and to provide a practical example (albeit perhaps an extreme one) of what could happen when an instructor fully embraces student participation, I would like to offer an anecdote of a student presentation that most instructors would find uncomfortable and wildly inappropriate in the classroom. This story is an example of performance art, which is one way to embody a learning experience. In Performing Pedagogy: Toward an Art of Politics, Charles R. Garoian argues, “A pragmatic form of cultural criticism, performance art serves as critical pedagogy whereby speech codes are taught, contested, and re-presented in the form of new ideologies, identities, and cultural myths” (5). Furthermore, Garoian goes on to define performance art as “a reflexive process of embodiment that enables the subject to turn history onto itself and interrogate its terrain” (6). Therefore, while the performance may be criticized by some, this anecdote will, hopefully, also serve to show how engaged pedagogy can utilize an unstable classroom environment in a positive way.

Upon reading both “A Portrait of a Lady,” by T.S. Eliot, and “Portrait d'une Femme,” by Ezra Pound, in my undergraduate studies, I was charged with giving a presentation to the class about the devices used, the interpretation of the poems, and my own commentary on the subject matter. I wanted to explore the importance of
euphemistic imagery and metaphor in poetry and I wanted to argue that an accurate or literal portrayal of a subject would not be acceptable to readers. In the instance of these two poems, the authors attempted to characterize the identity (or lack thereof) of a “lady.” What is interesting about both poems is that there is little to no description of the actual woman. Instead, her trinkets, her surroundings, her idle conversations define her and ultimately provide the material to judge her by. I was bothered and fascinated by the ability to define a woman without ever directly addressing the woman. I presented this problem to my classmates. I drew an image of a woman on the board, asking, Is this an accurate depiction of a woman? I placed my jewelry, accessories, and shoes on a table and asked, Can these accoutrements identify a woman? I then asked, What would be the most faithful representation of a woman? In doing so, I stripped down to my underwear, declaring in a Sojourner Truth-esque manner, “Aren't I a more accurate portrayal of a woman?” I then answered the question for my classmates, stating: “No, because most of you are too shocked by such an accurate portrayal, you are too distracted to appreciate it.” The point in this action was to demonstrate how artists have a privileged ability to embrace otherwise controversial subject matter (in this case, female identity made more palpable through poetic imagery) by using metaphor and euphemisms.

Putting aside the legitimacy of my literary argument, the fact that I took off my clothes in front of a class will strike many as indecent. It also begs many questions, with few clear answers: Did I exploit myself? How should my male teacher have responded? Did I make my classmates uncomfortable by showing too much skin? Was anyone turned on? Did this make me fair game for unwelcome male attention? My presentation is an example of how a student, freed from the traditional modes of Truth-based teaching and given the opportunity to construct and experience knowledge, can create a situation most instructors would be terrified of. It is also a clearer example of the “sexual threat” Farber discussed, because I apparently was not socialized well enough to learn that taking off my clothes in public is inappropriate. The questions that I would like to pose are: Is this fear necessary? Is control necessary? Is a half-naked girl really a threat to the classroom environment or can the body have some educational value? Through the lens of engaged pedagogy, how can we look at this situation in a less fearful light?
Although the act had an academic purpose to my discussion, it is hard to get past the reaction that a nearly naked female student in a college class can incite a multitude of problems for both students and teachers. Fear is not an unreasonable reaction. bell hooks observes that there is a “grave sense of dis-ease among professors (irrespective of their politics) when students want us to see them as whole human beings with complex lives and experiences rather than simply as seekers after compartmentalized bits of knowledge” (15). It would have been much easier and more comfortable for me to present a reading of the poems with a handout and an in-depth academic analysis. But I had responded to the poems as a “whole human being” and therefore wanted to present that response as a “whole human being.” For years, I had been asked over and over again to read male authors’ depictions of women, while simultaneously being asked to tone down my own expressions of femininity. My professor ultimately respected my interpretation; however, he was visibly uncomfortable.

This discomfort is understandable when we take into account how rarely teachers are asked to consider the bodies of their students in relation to their minds, which, for the purposes of engaged pedagogy, is exactly what must be cultivated as it has been absent from the classroom for so long. hooks recognizes that, throughout her career, “No one talked about the body in relation to teaching” and goes on to explain:

Trained in the philosophical context of Western metaphysical dualism, many of us have accepted the notion there is a split between the body and the mind. Believing this, individuals enter the classroom to teach as though only the mind is present, and not the body. To call attention to the body is to betray the legacy of repression and denial that has been handed down to us by our professional elders, who have usually been white and male. (191)

The “legacy of repression and denial” she refers to is, once again, Ideological State Apparatuses. I have previously discussed ISAs’ ability to exclude the histories and cultural realities of marginalized students. It is equally important to recognize the oppression carried out by excluding, exploiting, or regulating the physical bodies of students. This is most obvious in the treatment of women as their bodies have been, at first, completely forbidden in higher education, and, even on upon admittance, subjugated by areas of study, dress codes, and even high rates of physical abuse on campus. A university may be lauded for its high educational standards, but its treatment of the literal student body is generally ignored. Schools have been able to carry out these injustices
because, as an ISA, they enforce not only a one-sided Truth, but a renunciation of the body, which creates the mind/body split.

Freire also describes this schism that results from traditional education, stating, “Things are true because the teacher says they’re true. At a very early age we all learn to accept ‘two truths,’ as did certain medieval churchmen. Outside of class, things are true to your tongue, your fingers, your stomach, your heart. Inside class things are true by reason of authority” (92). To join these two truths, to reclaim education for the empowerment of the students, teachers must find a place for the fingers, stomach and heart inside the classroom; they must allow students to reclaim their right to a relationship with their bodies. Whereas Freire previously noted the detachment that traditional pedagogy causes in students, treating students as both physical and mental beings allows education to become a visceral, meaningful, living part of the students' lives. Once again relating this to my unorthodox presentation, one could look past the discomfort of nudity and appreciate the attempt to connect poetic device with the physical effect on the female body, thus creating an embodied lesson rather than a detached lesson. In the words of Farber, reconciling the mind/body split pushes participants “past the zone of academic bullshit, where dedicated teachers pass their knowledge on to a new generation, and into the nitty-gritty of human needs and hang ups” (Student 90). Instead of a curriculum that transmits a list of what to know, a curriculum concerned with humanity is an exploration of how one knows, and how that knowledge feels.

Of course, that moment “past the zone of academic bullshit” is exactly where it gets tricky. Not only have we been trained in splitting the mind from the body, we have been trained to be ashamed of the body and the knowledge gained from the body, namely sexuality. Farber explains:

There is a kind of castration that goes on in schools. It begins before school years with parents’ first encroachments on their children's free unashamed sexuality and continues right up to the day when they hand you your doctoral diploma with a bleeding, shriveled pair of testicles stapled to the parchment. It’s not that sexuality has no place in the classroom. You’ll find it there but only in certain perverted and vitiated forms. (Student 96-97)

Ignoring the body does not make it disappear from the classroom; it only redirects the emotions to other avenues, contributing yet another factor to an unhealthy school
environment. hooks remembers a particular male student whom she was accused of treating too harshly and unfairly. Reflecting on the reasons for her treatment of this student, she “realized [she] was erotically drawn to this student. And that [her] naïve way of coping with feelings in the classroom that [she] had been taught never to have was to deflect..., repress, and deny” (192). It is indeed naïve to pretend that teachers or students will shed all attractiveness or sexuality upon entering the classroom. Subsequently, it is unfair to be shocked at deviant sexual behavior when both teachers and students are left to fumble through the presence of these natural feelings on their own. It is ironic that by avoiding addressing sensitive issues out of the fear that it will produce disturbing consequences, we may be directly causing our worst fears to manifest. Inappropriate relationships or abuse between teachers and students, the rise of self-mutilation and drug abuse, campus violence: these problems are not going away. And while certain programs and classes attempt to confront these issues, they are often too late or too simplified. According to Farber, conversations of sex, etc. become “sanitized and abstracted” (Student 97) and ultimately fail. Farber insists that “what’s missing, from kindergarten to graduate school, is honest recognition of what’s actually happening” and goes on to say “it’s not that sex needs to be pushed in school; sex is push enough. But we should let it be, where it is and like it is” (Student 97). Champions of traditional pedagogy accuse liberal educators of “lying” about the “Truth,” undermining education with “relativity.” Yet, in many instances, it would seem as though it is traditional pedagogy that wants to sidestep reality (here the sexuality of both teachers and students), while engaged pedagogy strives for honesty about the elements influencing our education.

Of course, sexuality is not the only function of the body and is not the only aspect that complicates and/or enriches the classroom. hooks maintains, “To understand the place of eros and eroticism in the classroom, we must move beyond thinking of those forces solely in terms of the sexual, though that dimension need not be denied” (194).

17 This is not to say that students and teachers should enter into romantic or sexual relationships, although that argument can and has been made. The political and practical implications of such relationships are a discussed by Jane Gallop in Feminist Accused of Sexual Assault. Plato’s Phaedrus also demonstrates how love can enhance the teacher-student relationship. Here, however, I am merely calling attention to the common human impulses that can never be fully edited out of the classroom and arguing that the first step in responsibly addressing the issues of student/teacher relationships is acknowledging the presence of these emotions.
What is more important than the specificity of sex is that “eros is a force that enhances our overall effort to be self-actualizing” (195). Once again, educational potential must be reached by the full human, both in mind and body. After all, the body must act out what the mind learns and thus the body brings immediacy, physicality, and motivation to the classroom setting.

Broadening the scope of the body beyond just sexuality, Farber’s 2008 essay “Teaching and Presence” stresses what it means to be “present” in the classroom. However, presence is another element of engaged pedagogy instructors may resist. Teachers often warn their students, “There is more to participation than just coming to class,” but perhaps forget that lesson also applies to them. In an attempt to simplify and neutralize class sessions, instructors may often put on blinders to the intricacies of the classroom, or block out the nerve-wracking reality that they stand up day after day in front of a crowd of strangers. In contrast, engaged pedagogy tells teachers, “There is more to teaching, than just showing up to class.” Once again, the goal is to highlight the fact that actual, living, breathing human-beings make up the educational system. Farber asks that instructors “recognize the classroom for what it is: a place where individual worlds, individual universes converge in real time and real space” (Presence 216). As a teacher, I must be aware that eighteen-year-olds, young adults struggling with the business of growing up, who may or may not have been up til 2 a.m. studying or discovering the effects of alcohol, are rolling out of disheveled beds at 7:30 in the morning to come sit at tiny, Formica desks for an hour, listening to the drone of my voice. However, trained in traditional pedagogy, many instructors may be hesitant to allow such observations to play a role in their educational decisions.

Being fully present and noticing the presence of others opens up the classroom to endless complications. One could argue that the individual stories of the students are irrelevant to the goals of a classroom and moreover, it would be impossible to fairly address each student on such a level. However, the practice of being fully present, of accepting the wholeness of students, does not mean a teacher must cater to every

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18 Farber points out that the growing reliance on technology and online classes complicates this claim. The shift towards “virtual education” must be taken into account in further research; however, I believe that it in no way prevents issues of humanization from being relevant. In fact, the explosion of technology and the “post-human” may be an even greater push for continued humanization in education.
discomfort and personal history of his/her students, but the teacher must walk in and actually *look* at them, *see* them as bodies in a constructed space. Teachers must come to terms with the fact that “each person [in the classroom] is an absolute center, and yet, with respect to the classroom itself, each person is also an emissary: from a family, a set of locales, a set of social contexts, a long history of nights and days” (Presence 216).

When I step into the classroom each morning, I do it with the awareness of this setting, in which I (an artsy, idealistic young female teacher/student, struggling through the lessons of my Twenties) am about to enter a conversation with *all of them* (thirty tired, distracted teenagers exploring the opportunities and craziness of the first year of college, who have other teachers and other tests to plague them). It is intimidating. But, what is amazing about this observation is that, despite what is going on in our individual lives, we (my thirty students and I) somehow have arrived in the classroom to “converge.” This convergence is where learning takes place.

Attention to the body in the classroom aids engaged pedagogy in its goal to affirm individuals so the individual may subsequently contribute to a greater more inclusive whole. Acknowledging my students’ bodies shows them that I appreciate that they have chosen to engage in the educational process. While traditional pedagogy wants to conform and standardize the student population into a manageable whole, engaged pedagogy celebrates the dynamic qualities of an embodied, humanized education. Instructors may have valid concerns about the latent volatility of the classroom, but one must ask “isn’t this unwieldiness ultimately inseparable from what gives a live learning group such potential educational power?” (Presence 217). Farber goes on to describe this educational power:

> Because the classroom is present, immediate, and alive; because of its complexity and multidimensionality; because what takes place in it is physically and socially situated; because it allows a lively and productive interplay between cognition and affect: for all of these reasons, it is a place where learning can reach deep, can establish within each individual a wide range of connections and of *kinds* of connections, can be integrated, can be memorable, can be transformative. (Presence 217)

Engaged pedagogy tackles humanity (sexually, bodily, personal), not as elements to be ashamed of but as something to harness towards educational progress. This is because, as Freire puts it, engaged pedagogy is “not content with a partial view of reality but always
seeks out the ties which link one point to another and one problem to another” (73-4). Again, the goal is to heal the separation that occurs both within the individual and between teachers and students. The hope is that education is capable of responding to our entire reality, not just the limited lessons of a textbook. A holistic view of reality rather than a partial one must include the body, which, yes, must also include the sexual or erotic. hooks agrees, arguing, “Given that critical pedagogy seeks to transform consciousness, to provide students with ways of knowing that enable them to know themselves better and live in the world more fully, to some extent it must rely on the presence of the erotic in the classroom to aid the learning process” (hooks 194). What is necessary then is a flexible and honest approach to education that makes room for the inconsistencies and contradictions inherent in the learning process.

It is important to note that engaged pedagogy does not ignore the discomfort or the complications that can arise from more open classroom conversations. It faces them head on. Engaged pedagogy accepts that “in all cultural revolutions there are periods of chaos and confusion, times when grave mistakes are made” (hooks 33). It is okay to feel scared or uneasy. However, engaged pedagogy does not give in to these negative emotions or allow them to prevent educational progress, because “if we fear mistakes, doings things wrongly, constantly evaluating ourselves, we will never make the academy a culturally diverse place where scholars and the curricula address every dimension of that difference” (33). Therefore, “we cannot despair when there is conflict” (33). So much of lesson-planning is spent on preventative measures: How can instructors present information with the least amount of conflict? Jane Gallop, however, warns that the focus of prevention can be a disservice to students, arguing, “Protecting students from knowledge that would make them uncomfortable seemed ultimately a failure to teach them, placing some other relationship above our duty as their teachers” (62). Discomfort can actually be a powerful impetus for better learning. In fact, the conflict and the messiness of learning is where it becomes truly exciting.19 When education becomes concerned with humanization it moves past being a chore and transforms into a way of living, a never-ending process that welcomes obstacles as a catalyst for growth. When

19 Pratt describes the positive outcomes of conflict in one class this way: “Along with rage, incomprehension, and pain, there were exhilarating moments of wonder and revelation, mutual understanding, and new wisdom—the joys of the contact zone” (39).
education is concerned with the body, it is no longer something that just “happens to a
student” within the boundaries of a school. An embodied education does not allow
knowledge to be separated from the individual and students carry that embodied
education with them, outside the classroom and into communities; it continues, never
finishes. Freire notes, “Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention,
through the restless, impatient continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the
world, with the world, and with each other” (72). Education is dynamic, continuous hard
work for both teacher and student. To censor, simplify, or sanitize, education even with
the good intention of avoiding conflict degrades it. But, if educators cling to Freire's
assertion that knowledge must also occur “with each other,” the fears that have held back
their progress may be quelled. Instead of “us against them,” it simply becomes “us”
working towards a common goal: a better educational future.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

All alone, or in twos,
The ones who really love you
Walk up and down outside the wall.
Some hand in hand
And some gathered together in bands.
The bleeding hearts and artists
Make their stand.

And when they've given you their all
Some stagger and fall, after all it's not easy
Banging your heart against some mad bugger's wall.
"Isn't this where..."
Pink Floyd “Outside The Wall”

Teachers often feel like they are banging their head against a wall, because many times they actually are. In the attempt to protect themselves from uncertainty and chaos, instructors have built up walls towards the educational process and, inside these walls, they approach their classrooms coldly, frustrated, and lonely. However, Pink Floyd end their album with the hope of being “outside the wall,” a place that is not in isolation but one of community, love, and towards progress. While some use the labels “bleeding hearts and artists” derisively, Pink Floyd claims it is these idealists who will be responsible for change. The hope of engaged pedagogy is students will rise up to claim their humanity and fashion their education as a tool for empowerment and progress. Within this hope, however, is another: that the buttoned-up professor who was once at odds with the needs of his students will join the rebellion and help tear down the walls that have separated society for so long. Even though the focus of engaged pedagogy is on the power of students and fosters the students' ability to participate and construct their own education, this does not mean that teachers have no place in the transformation of education. Crucial to Freire’s theories is that those who have traditionally been oppressors have a stake in this process of humanizing education. He claims, “No one can be authentically human while he prevents others from being so” (85). It is impossible to
deny the humanity of another person without simultaneously dehumanizing oneself and teachers are no exception. The history of traditional pedagogy that has marginalized the student population has also degraded teachers. Therefore, if instructors intend to recover what they have lost in this degeneration, they must help students regain what they have lost as well. Freire goes on to state, “If what characterizes the oppressed is their subordination to the consciousness of the master, as Hegel affirms, true solidarity with the oppressed means fighting at their side to transform the objective reality which has made them these ‘beings for another’” (49). In this case, there is a groundbreaking epiphany that teachers can stop working against students, and do not even have to work in spite of students, but can work with them. At that point, the classroom is no longer a hierarchy of teachers over students, nor is it mob hysteria with students belligerently defying teachers. Instead, it becomes a community of learning where teachers and students are one in the same and work side by side.

However, I began this project not to convince teachers to simply be more empathetic, but with the assumption that teachers do have the desire to work with their students. I have asserted that more important than trying to convince my audience that students should have power, is the question of why teachers put up walls towards a more progressive, liberating pedagogy in the first place. In addition to the issues of an oppressive history, a dependence on Truth, and the fear of bodies which I have outlined in the previous chapters, the second stanza of Pink Floyd's concluding song further answers my question: “And when they've given you their all/Some stagger and fall, after all it's not easy/Banging your heart against some mad bugger's wall.” Engaged pedagogy asks teachers and students to “give their all” while simultaneously recognizing how often both will “stagger and fall.” With progress comes risk and this is a risk many instructors may not be willing to take. After all, teachers, regardless of their political or pedagogical stance, place themselves in a vulnerable position every day and “[e]ven when school authorities and teachers understand the importance of change, most still experience everyday life in the school as an uphill battle to achieve minimum order” (Aronowitz-Giroux 7). Charged with the task of guiding and building their students' futures, they bravely present themselves to the judgment of thirty (or more) scrutinizing eyes. This is a heavy responsibility. There are many days, as a teacher, that I collapse with self-doubt.
There are days that begin with enthusiasm and hopefulness, but when I ask my students to meet me half way, I find myself alone, feeling like a crazy woman preaching gibberish to no one. These are the days when I understand why instructors want nothing to do with engaged pedagogy, when I ask myself “What the hell am I doing?” These are the days when my students look like Pink Floyd's faceless masses on a conveyor belt and I feel justified stepping up on my pedestal to impart an undeniable Truth to their blank, uninformed minds. I want to keep them over there, away from me because it's easier, safer, because if I don't care about their futures my heart won't break when the lesson doesn't succeed.

Every teacher has these days, but I have tried to show that building up walls between teachers and students only fuels the frustrations of the classroom. Ignoring the historical disenfranchisement of students breeds hostility. Aligning oneself with a universal Truth divides and demeans the individual communities of the students. Censoring the body out of the classroom creates an incomplete, detached education motivated by fear. What we are left with is an education in crisis: students and teachers in a silent, stubborn war. But if education is at war, it is not between teachers and students; it is between oppression and freedom; the past and the future; the machine and the human. Most teachers believe in the immense and invaluable power of education, but they simultaneously give in to the reactionary fears that place students in opposition to the educators' goals. Freire argues:

> The oppressor is in solidarity with the oppressed only when he stops regarding the oppressed as an abstract category and sees them as persons who have been unjustly dealt with, deprived of their voice, cheated in the sale of their labor—when he stops making pious, sentimental, and individualistic gestures and risks an act of love. True solidarity is found only in the plenitude of this act of love, in its existentiality, in its praxis. To affirm that men and women are persons and as persons should be free, and yet to do nothing tangible to make this affirmation a reality, is a farce. (50)

I want to point out Freire's emphasis on acts of love. This is a crucial element that I will return to in a moment. But first, I want to look closer at what it means to truly be in “solidarity.” Teachers who desire a better educational environment for both themselves and their students must leave empty rhetoric behind (the continual, ingenuous platitudes about “engaging students with the material” while still imparting knowledge down to
them and dictating what the students should think about the “engaging” material) and, instead, must become *active participants* in the messy, wonderful process of learning.

Active participation means that teachers never cease being students as well. When instructors understand this, walls automatically begin to fall and a community is built. The history of marginalized citizens should become a shared history in which instructors are no longer stubbornly trying to control the Other, nor are they awkwardly trying to speak from multiple voices that are not their own. Every teacher has been a student, has struggled through the mire of history lessons, drafting essays, abstract equations, and never-ending novels. They have grumbled about the injustice of a particular teacher, been disgusted with the poor quality of resources, cried over the cruelty of their classmates, or contemplated the relevance or accuracy of a standardized test. The frustrations that drive students to rebel against their education have, most likely, once been the frustrations of the teacher who leads them. And, if the teacher continues to learn alongside their students, those frustrations may still be immediate. This is particularly true in the current economic climate that leaves both students and teachers feeling undervalued as they face the very real possibility that their educational goals (whether it be employment or admittance) may be taken away from them. More and more teachers are being pushed to the margins of the educational system and, while this is an unfortunate reality, perhaps this regrettable experience can at least align teachers with the position of their students.

Of course, there is the concern that attempting to relate to the plight of every student results in flimsy, disingenuous speeches of “multiculturalism” in the classroom. Not every teacher belongs to a group that has been categorically omitted from the school system or curriculum, but it is important to note that the implication of the term “participation” is that the teacher is one of many. If an educator steps back from the

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20 For a discussion of this problem look at “The Marginalization of Teacher Education: Who We Are, How We Got Here, How We Fit in the Big Picture, and What We Might Do about It,” by Alan H. Jones, who claims that “elected officials, representing the public, are making policy decisions that infringe on our profession without consulting those of us who are impacted and without benefit of the professional knowledge that we possess” (26).

21 Once again, see Jarratt’s discussion in which she warns speakers against “the danger of obscuring their own acts of discursive imperialism in the process of facilely ‘representing’ the interests of apparently silent subjects of oppression” (1382).
misguided responsibility to be what Foucault calls the “bearer of the universal,” and shares the task of teaching with students, then the educator does not have to speak for every voice, because each voice can speak for itself. As perpetual and sophisticated students, teachers can be excited about the opportunity to approach knowledge from diverse viewpoints and welcome the challenge to draw connections between the complexities and contradictions that exist within such diversity. Instead of being intimidated by the vastness of knowledge, teaching as an active participant is to enthusiastically dive into this multifaceted classroom environment. The idea that one can and should arrive at the Truth hushes these voices, limits the world of possibility, and stunts the educational journey.

I became a teacher because I never wanted to stop growing as a student. I love the classroom precisely because it, as Freire has observed, reaffirms me as a person. The classroom is where I feel my potential as a human, as body and flesh and thought making sense of my existence. The power of education is not to check off a list of “Things I Know.” Education allows me to enter a space with thirty people who begin as strangers and together we communicate, commiserate, question and challenge each other to arrive at a completely different space as a community, not always in agreement, but with respect. We keep coming back together (even at ungodly hours like 8am or 9pm), because our arrival is never the end of the journey; we never reach that moment where everything has been figured out. In fact, sometimes we start over at the beginning. Sometimes I know something, only to forget it, or I know it in my mind, but must grapple and wrestle with what it means to my life. This constant arrival, retreading, rising and falling of the classroom is intimate and immediate. A teacher standing outside that intimacy can only watch their students from a distance as the students exchange timid glances, then names, then jokes, as they laugh or complain together and ultimately as they grow. But as an active participant, the teacher joins the busyness of the classroom and teaching is no longer a thankless, underpaid job, but an exciting, unpredictable life.

Because there is so much to ask of teachers, this thesis does not pretend to be a remedy to the crisis. For one, as has been stated, there will always be a level of chaos, struggle and stress—the hope is to embrace a certain level of tension as positive to the learning experience. But also, to look at the current situation realistically, teachers play
only one part and cannot shoulder the burden of transforming the educational system alone. The hesitancy of students, so conditioned to expect an oppressive traditional pedagogy, the detachment of politicians and administrators, the values of families: each group has their own fears that must be addressed over time. But, I do hope this paper can be a beginning. Unlike the other contributors, teachers have consciously chosen their direct involvement in education; they have dedicated their lives to it.

Therefore, teachers are in place to be the spark that ignites those around them. Hopefully, teachers possess something that students, administrators, parents, and politicians may not have discovered yet: love, love for the potential of education and the willingness, as Freire as mentioned, to turn this love into action. The prerequisite of overcoming each of the obstacles I have outlined in these chapters is indeed love and passion for both academic knowledge and community growth. As a student, what got me through so many tear-filled semesters, endless revisions of papers, and piles of books was my love for the process of learning. I knew I was becoming better as a citizen, as a woman, and an individual with every scrape and bruise I suffered along the way. And now, as a teacher, what gets me through the migraine inducing grading, the crest-fallen looks of students, their frustration and my frustration is still that love. It is my love for my students' journeys and it is also their love for me as they show me (albeit in small, fleeting moments) they are open and struggling and growing along with me. We reach the end of the semester mentally and emotionally exhausted, but, as a class, we are stronger and grateful. As Pink Floyd sings, “the ones who really love you” are the ones who gather outside these walls. It is perhaps trite to end with a call towards love, but in an environment so knotted with complexities and contradictions, perhaps it is best to grasp on to such a simple notion: as teachers, love what we do. Trust that love. And with love, the crisis, the fears, and the obstacles that have been holding education back: these unnecessary walls will all start to crumble away.
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